



**CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**  
**Meeting Minutes #788**  
**September 22, 2021**



**Hugh Crooks, Jr., Chair**  
**Robin Umberg, Vice-Chair**  
**Todd Trotter, Member**  
**Zoe Dunning, Member**

**Ed Campbell, Member**  
**Vacant, Member**  
**Vacant, Member**  
**Tina Lassiter, Executive Officer**

The California Veterans Board (CVB) met utilizing "Bluejeans" videoconferencing on September 22 at 9:30 am.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:** Chair Hugh Crooks, Vice Chair Robin Umberg, Ed Campbell, Zoe Dunning, Todd Trotter and Tina Lassiter

**Absent:** - Megan Elsea

28 members of the public were present for portions of the meeting.  
Chair Crooks presided.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS**

Chair Crooks welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. The Board Members introduced themselves. Secretary Imbasciani announced that the Governor's office just announced the extension of the executive order that allowed Boards and Commissions to have virtual meetings through January 2022.

**MINUTES RECOMMENDATION**

Approved minutes from the July meeting. Member Umberg requested the census information requested of the Homes division be included in the minutes.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS –**

1. Bobby McDonald, Veterans Alliance of Orange County, talked about the establishment of the Orange County Veterans cemetery, Anaheim Hills-Gypsum Canyon site. Ms. Umberg applauded Mr. McDonald's work and asked if the site has been studied yet and published for viability to which the answer was no, but they are working on it. Secretary Imbasciani shared a map of the concentric circles of the national cemeteries in California which was recently provided by the National Cemetery Administration at the National Association of State Directors meeting. Attachment.

Bobby Mac added that on June 14, 2022, the Buffalo Soldiers will re-enact the 1900-mile bicycle ride of 1897, from Fort Missoula Montana to St Louis, Missouri.

2. Nestor Aliga, thanked Secretary and Board for support for the Mare Island Naval Base and reported that the VA will start the process of taking over the naval base. He also added that common comments among the veteran population is that cemeteries are too far away and the main reason only 15% of veterans are buried in the national cemeteries.
3. Gayle Ocheltree, CVSO Los Angeles, requested an avenue to process veteran recognition on drivers licenses while so many offices are closed due to Covid to which Secretary Imbasciani said he would find this answer through his Deputy Secretary, Keith Boylan and get back to her.

#### **PRESENTATIONS –**

1. Mr. Dennis Tucker and Devon Deming provided an update on the Fairless Systems Initiative. Attachment

#### **DEPARTMENT UPDATE – Dr. Vito Imbasciani, Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).** Secretary Imbasciani thanked all for attending and

**Covid** – there are new mandates regarding vaccinations and testing that affect clinical care and stronger mandates at headquarters. Staff vaccination rate stalled for a bit but is now up to 83% which is the highest in the country. HQ will begin new order that will require employees to show vaccination or agree to be tested twice a week. The Governor is taking the health of the work force very seriously.

**Homes** – Inspections...CalVet was hoping to get the VA and Medicare to agree to accept each others inspections and not have to go through both inspections because it can be disruptive but there was no agreement. Nevertheless, the homes remain in 5-star standing.

**Vacancies** – Secretary welcomes the new Deputy Secretary for Women Veterans.

**General** – Secretary Imbasciani reported a wonderful addition to the National Veterans Appeals Board that will most likely streamline the process.

Xochitl Rodriguez Murillo, Deputy Secretary, Minority Affairs, is planning to visit Indian tribes on their native lands in the northern counties to work on connecting these veterans with their benefits.

Thanks to all who attended the celebration of the Farm and Home loans anniversary party.

Senator Newsom's bill that would allow CalVet to refinance its own loans is on the Governors desk awaiting his signature and there is talk of a parallel program in the public sector for non-veterans.

Governors military Council will resume meetings in 29 palms in early October and will resume visits to military bases.

Questions/Comments: Member Umberg asked if it would be possible to receive the census of each home to which the Secretary replied that he can get that to her today.

Executive Officer asked about the process for testing those at HQ's not vaccinated to which Member Dunning shared their process with testing employees. Member Umberg shared the Senate and Assembly has also been administering self-testing and suggested contacting the Senate Nurse for info.

**CHAIR UPDATE** – Chair Crooks reported that we will continue our virtual meetings and maybe move into hybrid meetings in the future. He reported that he is working on getting recognition from the VA for national guard members so they can at least be buried in the national Veterans cemeteries.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Strategic Plan and Objectives**

#### **Action Items:**

1. **Hugh Crooks:** Communications and Marketing – see above.
2. **Robin Umberg:** complimented the Secretary for a very thorough update.  
**Regulations:** Did everyone read the letter submitted to the regulations? The process is still ongoing. Our letter will be posted on the regulatory site, however, there is nothing to report at this time because the deadline has not passed yet.
3. **Ed Campbell:** Homes – Member Campbell reported on a new program that he has been involved with at the VA that evaluates the effects of covid on the mind and body. He feels every home should know about it because it is very extensive, thorough and helpful.
4. **Robin Umberg** Legislation/Regulations – see above.
5. **Todd Trotter:** Home Loans – No report at this time.
6. **Zoe Dunning:** Underrepresented and Women Veterans – no report at this time.

**Questions/Comments:** Chair Crooks encouraged Board members to attend “Don’t ask don’t tell” tonight.

**Executive Officer update** – Executive Officer Lassiter reported that she continues to work on outreach and focused on California Mayors and City Council members.

**OLD BUSINESS –**

None

**NEW BUSINESS –**

**Receipt of new appeals and complaints:** Stephanie Bunt, Review of Record, College Tuition Fee Waiver - Accepted

**BOARD COMMENTS:**

- Member Trotter commended the department in its effective fight against Covid. He cautioned on the recent variant and other variants that will undoubtedly follow and create issues. Member Umberg asked if vaccinations are doing well against the variants to which Member Trotter responded that it is unknown at this time.
- Member Campbell added that one of the Ventura residents recently received the Booster. Also, a new social worker at the home has started two new programs....one is "Grief" and the other one is "Noodles". Both are very effective and he thinks would be a great presentation for our next meeting.
- EO said she would reach out to former board member, Mr. Busterud, who has re-applied for one of the board vacancies to see if he has heard anything from the Governor's office on his appointment. And she will be out of the office from October 25-29, 2021.

Next Meeting: November 17, 2021

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:30**